01405

1965/02/07

INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

~~TOP SECRET~~

Action

Info

CONTROL: 5685

RECD: FEBRUARY 7 1965, 3:13 A.M.

FROM: SAIGON

ACTION: SECSTATE 2420 PRIORITY

DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 1 P.M.

~~T O P S E C R E T~~

TO MC NAMARA AND VANCE FROM MC NAUGHTON

ASSURE PERSONAL DELIVERY PRIOR TO 0800 NSC MEETING

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1. FOLLOWING ARE THE POINTS I WANTED TO MAKE ON TELEPHONE BUT COULD NOT BECAUSE NO SECURE LINE AVAILABLE. THEY RELATE TO THEORY OF A GRADUATED REPRISAL PROGRAM WHICH WAS DISCUSSED AT LENGTH HERE BY BUNDY GROUP WITH TAYLOR, JOHNSON AND WESTMORELAND. THIS MESSAGE IS NOT INTENDED AS OFFICIA TRANSMISSION OF ANY CONSENSUS, BUT IS INTENDED TO FLAG A FEW POINTS WHICH MAY AFFECT THE CHARACTERIZATION, BY STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS, OF THE REPRISAL ACTION NOW IN PROCESS, AND OF OUR FUTURE INTENTIONS.

2. THE CONCEPT WOULD BE THAT OF A GRADUATED REPRISAL PROGRAM WHICH, THROUGH A MEASURED, CONTROLLED SEQUENCE OF ACTIONS AGAINST THE DRV, BROUGHT SUFFICIENT PRESSURE TO BEAR ON THE DRV TO PERSUADE IT TO STOP ITS INTERVENTION IN THE SOUTH. A ANALYSIS, RATIONALE AND ILLUSTRATIVE SCENARIO FOR THIS PROGRAM HAD BEEN PUT IN DRAFT HERE YESTERDAY, BEFORE THE PLEIKU INCIDENT.

3. OUR THOUGHT NOW

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Authority DOD ltr 5/25/76
By rmg, NARS, Date 7/26/76

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3. OUR THOUGHT NOW IS THAT THE FIRST ACTION (TODAY'S) WOULD BE A CLEAR CUT REPRISAL FOR A SPECIFIC ATROCITY, BUT THAT HEREAFTER REPRISAL ACTIONS WOULD BECOME LESS AND LESS RELATED TO SPECIFIC VC SPECTACULARS AND MORE AND MORE RELATED TO A CATALOGUE OF VC OUTRAGES IN SVN SAY IN A PRIOR SEVERAL-DAY PERIOD OF TIME. PRESUMABLY OUTRAGES SUCH AS ASSASSINATIONS, RAILROAD DESTRUCTION, AND SO ON WOULD, AS THE REPRISAL PROGRAM PROGRESS, NO LONGER BE PRIVILEGED VC ACTS. THEY WOULD BE SCOOPED UP IN THE GENERAL STATEMENT OF PROVOCATIONS WHICH JUSTIFIED THE THEN-CURRENT MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE DRV. ALL ALONG, CARE WOULD BE TAKEN TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THERE IS NO REPEAT NO OBJECTIVE TO DESTROY OR CONQUER THE DRV.

4. FOR THE PLAN TO WORK BEST, THE GVN SHOULD PARTICIPATE PROMINENTLY IN THE REPRISALS AND IN THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS. THERE IS A FEELING THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENTS IN EACH CASE SHOULD BE MADE HERE IN SAIGON.

5. NOT MUCH OF A GOVERNMENT IS REQUIRED FOR THE GVN TO PLAY ITS ROLE. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, INEFFECTUAL AS IT IS, IS ENOUGH TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A PROGRAM OF GRADUATED REPRISALS. IT IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO CARRY OUT THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM, BUT T WT IS ANOTHER QUESTION.

6. THE REPRISAL PROGRAM THUS GIVES SOMETHING LIKE A PHASE II, BUT PROVIDES A MUCH BETTER INTERNATIONAL AND INTERNAL-US POSTURE. IT ALSO REDUCES PRESSURE FOR NEGOTIATIONS. FEELING IS THAT US SHOULD BE VERY MUCH IN BACKGROUND WHEN AND IF NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN TO MAKE SENSE -- THAT, IF THERE IS AN ADEQUATE GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM AT THAT TIME, ANY TALKS SHOULD BE BETWEEN GVN AND DRV, PROBABLY AT A MILITARY LEVEL.

7. RELATED TO ALL THIS IS THE JUDGMENT THAT THE FABRIC OF SVN IS PULLING APART, THAT THINGS ARE GOING BADLY IN THE FIELD AS WELL AS IN SAIGON, AND JUST ABOUT ONLY QUESTION IS HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE FOR THE SITUATION TO DISINTEGRATE. THE JUDGMENT IS THAT A REGULAR PROGRAM WILL PROBABLY DAMPEN VC ACTIVITIES IN DUE COURSE AND WILL PROBABLY INSPIRE THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO MORE EFFECTIVE EFFORTS. THE BELIEF IS WIDESPREAD AMONG THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE THAT THE US IS ON THE VERGE OF BUGGING OUT.

8. RELEVANCE OF ALL

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8. RELEVANCE OF ALL OF THE ABOVE IS THAT STATEMENTS MADE SUNDAY AND MONDAY WILL DIFFER DEPENDING ON WHETHAT PLEIKU REPRISAL IS THOUGHT OF AS A SINGLE-SHOT AFFAIR LIKE GULF OF TONKIN OR WHETHER IT IS THROUGH OF AS THE START OF REPRISAL-ORIENTED SQUEEZE. BUNDY, WHO HAS NOT SEEN THIS MESSAGE, THOUGHT YOU WOULD WANT TO HAVE THIS INFORMAL THINKING IN HAND SUNDAY, SINCE WE ARE NOT DUE TO ARRIVE ANDREWS UNTIL LATE SUNDAY NIGHT. HE WILL REPORT HIS VIEWS ON ARRIVAL. YOU CAN EXPECT A MESSAGE FROM TAYLOR ON THIS SUBJECT LATER.

TAYLOR

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